



A theoretical and conceptual examination of low-income, first-generation college students and service-learning

Travis York, PhD student, The Pennsylvania State University [tty102@psu.edu]

Keywords: Dewey, student outcomes, first-generation students, low-income students, Astin's Input-Environment-Outcomes Model

Conference Track: Higher education student outcomes

Format: Research/Scholarly paper

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to explore a Deweyian theoretical framework of service-learning layered with Astin's (1991) Input-Environment-Outcomes (IEO) Model. This layering of theoretical and conceptual frameworks serves as the foundation to argue that differences in students' background characteristics affect the service-learning experiences of low-income, first-generation students and, thereby, the related outcomes.

Dewey's theory of learning results from the interplay between continuity and interaction. The principle of continuity forms a longitudinal continuum (present experiences are affected by past experiences and will affect future experiences), while the principle of interaction forms a lateral dimension of experiences (transaction between student and environment). Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction inform the theoretical foundations of service-learning and attribute its success to providing

situations for learning that draw upon personal backgrounds (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Jacoby & Associates, 1996).

The second layer of the author's theoretical framework is Astin's (1991) IEO model of student outcomes. The model consists of demographic characteristics and academic and social experiences (Inputs), experiences students encounter in college (Environment), and student characteristics, knowledge, skills, etc. as a result of college experiences (Outcomes) (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The IEO model illustrates Dewey's principle of interaction at work in the influence of inputs on environment as well as Dewey's principle of continuity in the influence of inputs on outcomes.

This layered model has two important implications. First, the model extends theoretical understanding of how students' backgrounds affect the experience and outcomes of service-learning. This is significant for the practice of service-learning pedagogy and for shaping educative experiences because it contributes to understanding how students' backgrounds impact their experience. Second, this model indicates that student background characteristics will likely affect outcomes related to their participation in service-learning. This is significant for the future research and appropriate validation of service-learning as an effective pedagogy.

References

- Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How undergraduates are affected by service participation. *The Journal of College Student Development*, 39(3), 251–263.
- Astin, A. W., Vogelgesang, L. J., Ikeda, E. K., & Yee, J. A. (2000). *How service learning affects students*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.
- Butin, D. W. (2006). The limits of service-learning in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, 29(4), 473–498. doi:10.1353/rhe.2006.0025
- Campus Compact. (2010). *2009 annual membership survey results: Executive summary*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact.
- Campus Compact. (2011). *2010 annual membership survey results: Executive summary*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact.
- Choy, S. (2000). *Low-Income students: Who they are and how they pay for their education* (Statistical Analysis Report No. NCES 2000-169). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Dewey J. (1941). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E., Jr. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Forsyth, A., & Furlong, A. (2003). *Losing out?: Socioeconomic disadvantage and experience in further and higher education*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.
- Giles, D. E., Jr., & Eyler, J. S. (1994). The theoretical roots of service-learning in John Dewey: Toward a theory of service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 1(1), 77–85.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Perna, L. W. (2002). Precollege outreach programs: Characteristics of programs serving historically underrepresented groups of students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(1), 64–83.
- Sax, L. J., Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (1996). What were LSAHE impacts on student volunteers? *Evaluation of Learn and Serve America, Higher Education: First Year Report*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Confronting the odds: Students at risk and the pipeline to higher education* (NCES 98-094). Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access, persistence, and attainment* (NCES 2001-126). Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *How families of low- and middle-income undergraduates pay for college: Full-Time dependent students in 1999–2000* (NCES 2003-162). Washington, DC: Author.
- Vogelgesang, L. J., & Astin, A. W. (2000). Comparing the effects of community service and service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 7, 25–34.
- Walpole, M. (2003). Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(1), 45–73. doi:10.1353/rhe.2003.0044